

Some previous discussions of the riot have touched on the claims by Wilmington's displaced African American residents that their property was seized and given to poor whites. One often-cited source of their claims is a vivid scene described in *Hanover, Or Persecution of the Lowly, A Story of the Wilmington Massacre*, the thinly-veiled fictional account published in 1900 by David Bryant Fulton.³⁷ Soon after the riot, Alex Manly speculated that whites conspired to deprive African Americans of their property. Manly's son Milo perpetuated his father's claims as late as 1977 and cited losses for his father and wealthy Wilmington black business leader Thomas C. Miller.³⁸

³⁷ Excerpt from *Hanover*: "She had reached the gate of her cottage, from which she had fled on the night of November 10 to escape insult and murder. A white woman sat upon the steps knitting, her children playing in the yard. The colored woman stood and momentarily gazed in amazement at the intruder upon her premises. 'Well, whart du you want?' said the white one, looking up from her work and then down again. 'That's the question for me to ask. What are you doing in my house?' . . . 'Niggers don't own houses in dis here town no mo'; white uns air rulin' now' . . . 'You poor white trash; I worked hard for this house, and hold the deed for it, so you get out!'" David Bryant Fulton, *Hanover: Or the Persecution of the Lowly, A Story of the Wilmington Massacre*, 110.

³⁸ Milo Manly, when asked about his father's property, said that it was sold for failure to pay taxes, although Alex Manly tried to prove he paid the taxes on the property. Sue Cody researched Manly's deed records and found reference to one property in his name prior to the riot. That property was held jointly with Frank Manly and John Goins. The men purchased the property between Dawson, Wright, Ninth, and Tenth Streets in 1897 for \$100, mortgaged it for \$20 in 1899, paid off the mortgage in 1902, and then transferred it to Manly's father-in-law F. C. Sagwar in 1907 for \$10. Manly and his wife Carrie acquired another property in Wilmington in 1907 but later transferred the property to other family members in four transactions between 1909 and 1915. Miller's holdings were much more extensive and cannot be easily summarized. For a review of Miller's real estate holdings before and after the riot, see

For researchers, the accepted method for researching property ownership and transfers is by following deed transactions. However, Milo Manly expressed the concerns of African Americans when he stated that checking deed records and other legal materials in the New Hanover County court house would prove fruitless because records had been "altered or stolen or lost" to the point that it could never be proven that his father and others ever owned disputed property. Whether Manly's claims are founded in truth is open to debate; however, for the purposes of this and other projects, what is left in the written records is all that survives from the period to provide an understanding of African American property ownership in the city both before and after the riot.³⁹ One fact also cannot be overlooked—by 1900, the number of African Americans owning real estate in the

Appendix A. Cody, "After the Storm," 118, 135; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 159-161; General Index to Real Estate Conveyances, New Hanover County, North Carolina State Archives; A.L. Manly et al to George Lutterloh, February 4, 1899, New Hanover County Deed Book 34, page 628.

³⁹ A series of duplicate deeds, arranged by block, can be found in the William B. McKoy Collections of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. The deeds are not indexed and some are in fragile condition. McKoy, attorney for the city, mortgage companies, and insurance firms, also was an integral part of the development of the White Government Union in the city during the 1898 campaign. Since discovery of the collection and its contents, some have speculated that McKoy contrived plans to duplicate mortgages for African American properties and slowly dupe African Americans out of their properties by a variety of methods. The collection is voluminous and unindexed and a thorough study of its contents would be a valuable contribution to an understanding of the development of early twentieth-century Wilmington. It is unclear how many of the mortgages were for whites or blacks, or if, as some suggest, the names on the mortgages are of real or imaginary people. McKoy also interfiled family histories, business records, political records, and other information in with the deeds. Further research in this collection is needed to understand McKoy's role.